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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 23 July 2014 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

In the 24 hours since the Security Council met yesterday to consider the ongoing crisis in the Gaza Strip, I deeply regret to inform you that more than 60 other Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces. As we continue to appeal to the international community to stop this barbaric Israeli aggression, and as regional and international efforts are being exerted to secure a ceasefire, Israel, the occupying Power, is instead choosing to intensify its military onslaught on the defenceless Palestinian civilian population it holds captive under its occupation throughout the occupied State of Palestine, and in particular in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Since our letter of Monday, 21 July (A/ES-10/642-S/2014/513), the number of innocent children, women and men killed and injured by the occupying Power has risen dramatically. The death toll, since the start of this Israeli war 15 days ago, now stands at more than 660 Palestinians killed. Shockingly, at least one third of all casualties are children under the age of 18 and more than half of the children killed thus far by the occupying Power were under the age of 12, exposing the brutality of the Israeli occupying forces and the false claims regarding respect for civilian lives.

As of today, 23 July 2014, the number of Palestinians injured stands at more than 4,220 people, many of them seriously injured and in need of urgent medical care that is not available in Gaza, which, owing to the blockade, is already plagued by a shortage of medical supplies and life-saving equipment. In this regard, hospitals and medical centres also continue to be targeted by Israeli occupying forces. Following the deadly attack by Israel on Al-Aqsa hospital in Deir al-Balah two days ago, today Israeli warplanes struck at Al-Wafa hospital in central Gaza, traumatizing sick and injured patients and forcing the doctors, nurses and staff struggling to care for them to flee for safety. Such attacks, without a doubt,

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constitute grave breaches of international humanitarian law, war crimes for which Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable.

The humanitarian impact of Israel's relentless bombardment against densely populated civilian areas in Gaza is vast. The occupying forces have destroyed 1,090 homes, partially demolished 994 homes and damaged more than 18,070 other homes. Moreover, owing to the destruction inflicted on water and sanitation lines, more than 900,000 people are without running water, deepening the immense humanitarian suffering being endured by the population. More than 110,000 Palestinians have been displaced by this aggression and have sought shelter in United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools, already double the number of persons who sought refuge from the 2008-2009 Israeli war on Gaza. However, we must stress that no place in Gaza is safe, as demonstrated by Israeli strikes in the past two days at an UNRWA school sheltering displaced Palestinians in central Gaza. UNRWA condemned in the strongest possible terms the shelling of its school, stated that the location of the school and the fact that it was housing civilians had been formally communicated to Israel on three separate occasions, and called for an immediate and comprehensive investigation.

Several Palestinians were also injured when Israeli forces bombarded the 700-year-old Al-Shamaa mosque (also known as Bab al-Darum) in the Al-Zaytoun neighborhood of Gaza City before noon today, yet another strike at a place of worship during this holy month of Ramadan. It should be noted that as of today, the occupying forces have caused damage to at least 65 mosques and two churches in Gaza.

As the list of Israeli crimes grows by the minute, I am compelled to share with the international community just some of the horrifying crimes it has deliberately perpetrated against the Palestinian people in recent days in grave breach of international law and human rights:

- On 22 July, Israeli forces killed four members of the Hajjaj family in Gaza City. Among the dead were Rawan Ziad Hajjaj (age 15), Yousef Muhammed Hajjaj (age 28), Muhammad Shehadeh Hajjaj (age 31) and Fayzeh Saleh Hajjaj (age 66).

- Also on 22 July, Israeli occupying forces killed two elderly women in Rafah in southern Gaza, Hakema Nafe Abu Odwan (age 75) and Najah Nafe Abu Odwan (age 85).

On 21 July, the Israeli occupying forces carried out a number of attacks that killed multiple members of several Palestinian families in Gaza. They included:

- Approximately 25 members of the Abu Jami family and 3 others were killed by an Israeli missile strike on a home in Khan Younis in southern Gaza. The majority of those murdered were children and women, two of whom were reportedly pregnant.

- 10 members of the Al-Qassas family were killed, including 6 children, and 4 others wounded when Israeli occupying forces shelled their home in Gaza City. The dead children were 3-year-old Saman, 4-year-olds Arwa and Mohamad, 7-year-olds Isra' and Nesma and 13-year-old Layma.

- 11 people, including six members of the Kelani family, were killed, and 40 others injured when Israeli warplanes attacked a high-rise apartment building in Gaza City, reducing most of it to rubble. The dead family was identified as Ibrahim Kelani, his wife and their four children.

- On 20 July, a young Palestinian man, searching for family members in the rubble of the Shujaiya neighborhood of Gaza City, was shot several times and killed by an Israeli sniper in a horrific incident that was captured on video.

We note that calls are being made by international human rights organizations worldwide, among them Israeli organizations, calling for an immediate end to Israel's aggression and detailing the extent of the war crimes by the occupying Power that have been committed to date. In this regard, on 21 July, Amnesty International USA issued a statement entitled "Attacks on Medical Facilities and Civilians Add to War Crime Allegations", stating, among other things, that "the continuing bombardment of civilian homes in several areas of the Gaza Strip, as well as the Israeli shelling of a hospital, add to the list of possible war crimes that demand an urgent independent international investigation".

Even though the international community has repeatedly called on Israel to end its bloody aggression against the Palestinian people, Israel, as it has previously, deliberately chooses to ignore those appeals and continues instead with its campaign of devastation and destruction against the Gaza Strip and its civilian population. The international community must continue to demand that the occupying Power immediately end its aggression, its gross collective punishment and all other crimes and violations it is perpetrating against the Palestinian people throughout the occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem.

The Security Council in particular must heed the calls from countries all over the world to shoulder its responsibilities, a call that was firmly and loudly made in the open debate of the Council on 22 July 2014. The Security Council must exert all efforts to bring about an immediate, durable ceasefire and an end to the illegal eight-year blockade and to provide protection for the Palestinian people. These steps are urgent to stop the bloodletting, stem the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and restore calm, following which the Security Council and international community as a whole must undertake urgent, serious and collective efforts to address the underlying causes of this crisis and the root causes of the conflict as a whole, at the core of which is Israel's 47-year-old belligerent military occupation, the source of the grave crisis, suffering and loss being endured by the Palestinian people.

This letter is in follow-up to our 509 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 21 July 2014 (A/ES-10/642-S/2014/513), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations